



Racial Justice



Millions of people of color are now saddled with criminal records and legally denied the very rights that their parents and grandparents fought for and, in some cases, died for. Affirmative action, though, has put a happy face on this racial reality. Seeing black people graduate from Harvard and Yale and become CEOs or corporate lawyers—not to mention president of the United States—causes us all to marvel at what a long way we’ve come. Recent data shows, though, that much of black progress is a myth. In many respects, African Americans are doing no better than they were when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated and uprisings swept inner cities across America.

—Michelle Alexander (“The War on Drugs and the New Jim Crow” page 75)



When slavery was legally abolished, a new set of laws called the Black Codes emerged to criminalize legal activity for African Americans. Through the enforcement of these laws, acts such as standing in one area of town or walking at night, for example, became the criminal acts of “loitering” or “breaking curfew,” for which African Americans were imprisoned. As a result of Black Codes, the percentage of African Americans in prison grew exponentially, surpassing whites for the first time.

—Jaron Browne (“Rooted in Slavery: Prison Labor Exploitation” page 78)

Photos:

(Upper left)
Faces collage by
Christine Joy Ferrer.

(Upper right) Oscar
Grant Memorial Art Proj-
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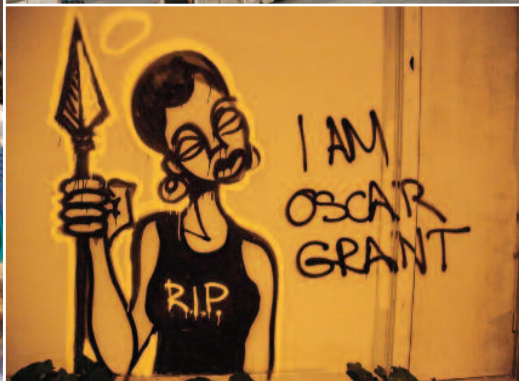
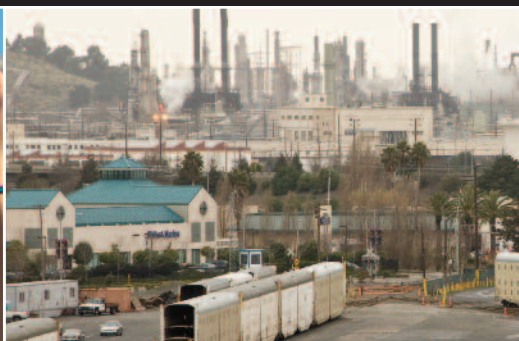
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